

**Christ the King
Sixth Form
College**

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1997-98**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education according to a four-year cycle. It also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Inspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in the work they inspect. A member of the Council's audit service works with inspectors in assessing aspects of governance and management. All colleges are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

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Contents

Paragraph

Summary

Context

The college and its mission 1

The inspection 6

Curriculum areas

Mathematics and science 8

Art and design 13

English 19

Psychology, sociology and religious studies 25

Cross-college provision

Support for students 30

General resources 37

Quality assurance 43

Governance 49

Management 55

Conclusions 63

College statistics

Grade Descriptors

Inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the report. They use a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses
- grade 2 – good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses
- grade 3 – satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses
- grade 4 – less than satisfactory provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths
- grade 5 – poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision, curriculum areas and lesson observations, for colleges inspected during 1996-97, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	59	30	2	–
Cross-college provision	18	51	27	4	–
Lesson observations	19	42	31	7	1

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report.* Grades were awarded using the guidelines in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*.
Sample size: 122 college inspections

Retention and Pass Rates

Where data on students' achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in two ways:

- as a retention rate, which is the proportion of students who completed a course in relation to the number enrolled on 1 November in the first year of the course
- as a pass rate, which is the proportion of students which passed examinations in relation to the number entered. Pass rates for GCE A level are quoted for grades A to E unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for GCSE courses are quoted for grade C or above unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for vocational and professional awards are for successful completion of the full award.

Summary

Christ the King Sixth Form College

Greater London Region

Inspected March 1998

Christ the King College is a Roman Catholic sixth form college in the Archdiocese of Southwark. The college produced a thorough, detailed self-assessment report. The judgements in the report were supported by clear evidence. In a few instances, the report gave insufficient weight to the college's strengths, and inspectors found some weaknesses which were not mentioned in the report.

The college's Roman Catholic ethos permeates all aspects of its work. The college offers a good range of GCE A level and GNVQ courses together with some GCSE courses and NVQ programmes for full-time students aged 16 to 19. Courses are well managed and the teaching is of a high standard. The proportion of lessons graded as good or outstanding by inspectors has risen by almost 10 percentage points since the last inspection. None of the lessons inspected was judged to be less than satisfactory. Students' achievements in most subjects are good, and some are outstanding. The provision in the four curriculum areas inspected was judged to be good with strengths which clearly outweigh the weaknesses. Students are provided with a wide range of support services and enrichment activities. The college is well governed and well managed. Resources are generally of high

quality, and have improved since the last inspection. There is a strong emphasis on building mutual respect between students and staff. Communications are good throughout the college. Procedures for quality assurance are sound. The college should: improve poor retention on some courses; continue to improve support for students with additional learning needs; use the data from the quality assurance procedures to analyse college-wide trends; establish more formal mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of strategic and operational objectives.

The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are given below..

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Mathematics and science	2	Support for students	2
Art and design	2	General resources	2
English	2	Quality assurance	2
Psychology, sociology and religious studies	2	Governance	1
		Management	1

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Christ the King College is a Roman Catholic sixth form college occupying a single site in Lewisham, in a building which formerly housed a comprehensive school. It is located in the Archdiocese of Southwark and operates in partnership with local parishes and Catholic schools. The college was established in 1992 as a result of a reorganisation of Roman Catholic secondary schools in Lewisham and Greenwich. Over 50 per cent of students come from the college's seven partner schools, six of which are Catholic, the other being an Anglican denominational school.

2 The college offers courses leading to the general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), and advanced and intermediate general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs), together with some general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and national vocational qualification (NVQ) provision. In November 1997, of the 945 students enrolled, 794 were studying at advanced level and 132 at intermediate level, all on full-time courses. Virtually all students are aged 16 to 19. At the time of the inspection the curriculum departments were grouped in four faculties: business, modern languages and information technology (IT); humanities and religious education; English, art and technology; and science and mathematics.

3 Over 70 per cent of students are from the London boroughs of Lewisham and Greenwich. Both boroughs are heavily dependent on the public sector for jobs. Unemployment in Lewisham and Greenwich, at 17.5 per cent and 15.6 per cent, respectively, is higher than the average of 13.3 per cent for Greater London as a whole. There are a number of other providers of post-16 education and training in the area. A large college of further education is nearby and there are 22 local authority and independent schools in Lewisham and Greenwich with sixth forms.

4 The mission statement affirms that, 'as a Catholic community, the college is committed to:

- mutual respect, positive encouragement and participation
- meeting the personal and educational needs of all students
- the highest standards of teaching, learning and performance
- maintaining a supportive partnership with parents, parishes, employers, schools and the local community
- the professional development of all staff'.

5 The college receives strong support from the diocese. The archdiocesan commission for schools and colleges assists the college in providing a range of services, including training for governors and staff, and advice on issues related to education. In developing the religious education and Catholic ethos of the college, advice and guidance is obtained from the archdiocesan Christian Education Centre.

Context

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected during the week beginning 23 March 1998. In planning and carrying out the inspection, the team reviewed the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other directorates of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The college submitted data on students' achievements for the three years 1995 to 1997. These were checked by the inspectorate against source data and found to be accurate. The inspection was carried out by 10 inspectors and an auditor, working for a total of 35 days. The team observed 57 lessons, examined students' work and a variety of documents, and held meetings with governors, managers, staff and students.

7 Of the lessons inspected, 82 per cent were outstanding or good, and no lesson was less than satisfactory or poor. This is significantly better than the figures of 61 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively, for colleges inspected between 1996-97 according to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*. It also represents an improvement of almost 10 percentage points in the proportion of lessons graded 1 or 2 since the last inspection in 1994. The average level of attendance in the lessons inspected was 71 per cent. The following table shows the grades awarded to the lessons inspected.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	13	17	8	0	0	38
GCSE	2	9	0	0	0	11
GNVQ	1	1	1	0	0	3
Other	1	3	1	0	0	5
Total	17	30	10	0	0	57

Curriculum Areas

Mathematics and Science

Grade 2

8 Inspectors concluded that the college's self-assessment report provided a generally accurate evaluation of the quality of provision, but that the college tended to be overcritical about some aspects of its work and achievements, whilst giving insufficient attention to some weaknesses.

Key strengths

- much good teaching on well-planned, well-managed courses
- good staff-student relationships
- high-quality study guides designed to promote independent learning
- GCE A level results above the national average in most subjects
- well-presented students' work of an appropriate standard
- good attendance and punctuality
- good resources to support learning
- very committed, experienced staff and good technician support

Weaknesses

- insufficient rigour in assessing students' work in some subjects
- failure to involve reluctant students in learning activities
- poor retention on some courses

9 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that science and mathematics courses are well planned and well managed. Some staff teach in more than one of the subject areas. All are committed to helping each student succeed. Daily staff meetings allow the exchange of ideas and information and complement the regular formal departmental meetings. Minutes of meetings and course

evaluation reports show that staff assess their performance regularly, seek ways to improve course delivery, and monitor students' opinions about the work of the department.

10 Teachers follow detailed schemes of work which are explained to students. Graded assignments ensure that the examination syllabus is covered, and take account of the different levels of ability among the students. Practical work is usually well organised and due emphasis is given to safety procedures. Relationships between staff and students are excellent. Students value the high level of extra support available to them through subject-specific workshops and revision sessions. In a minority of the lessons observed, the teacher did not engage all students in learning activities. There is some inconsistency in the level of detail in teachers' feedback on written assignments, despite a college policy on feedback.

11 In science, students work effectively on their own, using study guides backed up by lessons, extra support and practical work. In mathematics, where there is an emphasis on lectures followed by problem-solving, there is less reliance on students learning independently and less variety in the teaching methods used. Most students' coursework files are well organised and contain work of an appropriate standard. Attendance levels and punctuality are generally good. Results at GCE A level are consistently above the national average for sixth form colleges. The self-assessment report acknowledges this fact but gives insufficient attention to poor retention in some science subjects. The proportion of students gaining grades A to C for GCSE mathematics is below the national average because many students take the foundation level which has a maximum grade of D. However, some of those students go on to achieve a higher grade during the second year of their course.

12 Teachers are well qualified and have good knowledge of their subjects. There is an

Curriculum Areas

adequate number of technicians who work effectively with teachers in supporting practical work. Some mathematics classrooms are too small for class sizes. Inspectors agreed with the college's view that its range of learning resources in mathematics and science is good. Handouts, particularly subject study guides, are of a very good quality. Students have access to specialist IT facilities in the laboratories.

Samples of students' achievements in mathematics and science, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level sciences	Retention (%)	53	74	56
	Pass rate (%)	92	88	95
GCE A level mathematics	Retention (%)	74	88	73
	Pass rate (%)	74	90	88
GCSE sciences and mathematics	Retention (%)	75	82	90
	Pass rate (%)	34	45	61
GNVQ science	Retention (%)	100	81	83
	Pass rate (%)	66	64	83

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Art and Design

Grade 2

13 Inspectors generally agreed with the college's evaluation of strengths in the self-assessment report, but highlighted a number of weaknesses which had not been recognised by the college.

Key strengths

- good range of well-managed courses
- well-planned courses and lessons
- teaching which is generally sound and in some cases outstanding
- motivated students producing good-quality work
- pass rates which compare well with national averages
- projects with a strong multicultural emphasis
- well-resourced practical areas
- good links with external practitioners

Weaknesses

- some poor retention rates
- failure to involve some reluctant students in learning activities
- some poor written work, particularly on media courses
- insufficient technician support to fulfil the needs of a wide variety of courses

14 The college offers a well-balanced range of subjects including media studies, music, performing arts, photography, art and design. Courses leading to GCSE, GCE A/AS level, GNVQ intermediate and advanced qualifications provide opportunities for progression within the college, to higher education or to employment. Courses are generally well planned. Some weaknesses in planning identified in the self-assessment report have already been addressed.

In art and design, for example, development of IT skills is now integrated with the subject work on some units.

15 Overall, the standard of teaching is good. One-to-one teaching in art and photography allows students to work at their own pace, with the teacher advising and encouraging them. In performing arts and media studies, groups are well organised so that students are able to develop their own ideas while acquiring teamworking skills. Many projects have been devised to promote multicultural awareness. For example, students are working with local elderly African Caribbean people on a play based on stories of migration from the Caribbean to Britain after the Second World War. In a few lessons, teachers did not manage students effectively and failed to involve the whole group.

16 The college has identified high pass rates in many subjects as a strength. Inspectors agreed with this judgement. However, retention is poor in some subjects, and the course teams are considering ways of improving it. Students are highly motivated and have produced some outstanding practical work. For example, art and design students made a large sculpture with a millennium theme under the guidance of a local artist who was attached to the National Maritime Museum. The quality of some students' written work is poor; they have sound ideas and a grasp of difficult concepts, but lack clarity of expression.

17 The programme area is well managed. Several teachers are external moderators or examiners for awarding bodies and therefore have a national perspective on standards. Many staff use their current professional experience to enhance their teaching. The English, art and technology faculty makes a great contribution to the cultural life of the college through the enrichment programme. During the inspection, students mounted high-quality performances in dance and music.

Curriculum Areas

18 Specialist accommodation has been thoughtfully adapted to cope with increasing student numbers. A performing arts studio with lighting track, mirrors and sprung floor provides a flexible teaching space. The media studies equipment is being developed in order to keep pace with professional standards. Art and design studios allow for activities as diverse as ceramics, photography, printmaking, life drawing and fashion design. Teachers make effective use of wall space in order to produce exciting displays of students' work.

Examples of students' achievements in art and design, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level	Retention (%)	74	84	72
	Pass rate (%)	83	96	96
GNVQ intermediate and advanced	Retention (%)	91	88	89
	Pass rate (%)	80	86	91
GCSE	Retention (%)	73	86	74
	Pass rate (%)	84	67	94

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

English

Grade 2

19 Although inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report, they felt that insufficient weight had been given to some of the strengths in this curriculum area.

Key strengths

- good teaching
- good GCSE English and City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) literacy results
- well-motivated students
- helpful weekly workshops and vacation revision courses
- regular visits to theatres and conferences
- good range of learning resources

Weaknesses

- GCE A level English literature pass rates below national averages
- some poor course and lesson plans

20 The teaching of English is good and some is outstanding. In 10 out of the 12 lessons observed, the strengths outweighed the weaknesses. As recognised in the self-assessment report, teachers make effective use of a variety of teaching methods to sustain students' interest and support the development of a wide range of skills. However, some schemes of work and lesson plans are insufficiently detailed. Weekly workshops are open to all students on English courses, and provide valuable opportunities for students to get extra help. During the spring and summer terms, the workshops focus on revision for second-year students. Revision courses are also offered during vacations. GCE A level English students are given a reading list to encourage

wider reading beyond the set texts. Students take advantage of the frequent opportunities to go on theatre visits and attend subject-related conferences.

21 Students are highly motivated, and standards of punctuality, attendance and behaviour are high. The quality of students' work is generally good. Written assignments are marked carefully and contain constructive comments from teachers to help students to improve their performance. Students enjoy their courses and work well together in small groups. They have good note-taking skills, and contribute well to classroom discussions.

22 Examination results vary, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The GCE A level English literature pass rate is below the national average, and the value-added analysis used by the college indicates that the students are consistently performing less well in this subject than would be expected on the basis of their GCSE grades. On the other hand, the pass rate for GCE A level language and literature has been consistently above the national average. There have been improvements in the number of students achieving grades A to C in GCSE English in the last three years, and this was well above the national average in 1997. Pass rates in the C&G literacy examination have been consistently good: 100 per cent for the last three years.

23 The English courses are managed well. A comprehensive and detailed process of course review takes account of students' views and has resulted in a number of significant changes and improvements. Departmental meetings take place regularly.

24 Teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic about their subject. There is a good range of learning resources in the library and the learning resource centre. In addition to English language and literature texts, and a good collection of fiction, there are video and audio cassettes, workbooks, study guides and CD-ROMs.

Curriculum Areas

Examples of students' achievements in English, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level	Retention (%)	75	76	73
	Pass rate (%)	90	89	83
GCSE English	Retention (%)	80	84	92
	Pass rate (%)	27	55	74
C&G literacy	Retention (%)	87	56	80
	Pass rate (%)	100	100	100

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Psychology, Sociology and Religious Studies

Grade 2

25 Inspectors concluded that the college's self-assessment report provided a generally accurate and thorough evaluation of the quality of provision, although it did not give sufficient weight to some poor pass rates and retention.

Key strengths

- generally good and sometimes outstanding teaching
- effective use of a wide range of learning resources
- productive relations between teachers and students
- close supervision of students' progress
- good GCE A level pass rates

Weaknesses

- poor retention on some GCE A level courses
- low pass rates on GCSE courses

26 As part of its extensive humanities provision, the college offers GCE A level courses in psychology, sociology and religious education. Courses are carefully prepared, and their content is scholarly and up to date. There is also a general programme of religious education which is followed by all full-time students and which satisfies the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools issued by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Students benefit from a good range of written course materials which provide information, stimulus and guidance, a strength noted in the self-assessment report.

27 The college claims in its self-assessment report that the quality of teaching is good. This

claim was verified by inspectors. Lessons are well prepared, and have clear aims and objectives which are understood by students. Teachers use a variety of effective teaching methods. Students' attendance is good, except in some general religious education classes. Students are usually attentive and responsive in class, and contribute well to class activities, particularly in discussions and group work. Teachers' expositions of complex topics are clear and suitable for their audience. Teaching aids, such as video and sound recordings, are used extensively to reinforce learning. Sensitive and contentious issues are treated in a balanced and careful way, and debate is encouraged.

28 Written work is set regularly and graded carefully. However, the teachers' written comments do not always explain clearly to students how their work might be improved. Students who need additional help can attend regular workshops where they receive individual attention. Teachers supervise students' progress closely. The standard of students' contributions to debates is good. Some students produce written work of a high standard, but others display a poor standard of written English. Most GCE A level pass rates have been above national averages. The college's calculations indicate that students taking psychology and sociology at GCE A level perform better than students with similar GCSE entry qualifications elsewhere. However, retention is poor on some courses. In 1997, only half the students who had enrolled on GCE A level psychology and religious studies programmes completed their courses. The self-assessment report acknowledges this problem, but the college has not identified its causes with enough precision to enable satisfactory remedial measures to be taken. Those students who complete their course generally progress to higher education.

29 The courses are well managed, as the self-assessment report claims. Staff responsibilities are clear and understood. Teachers are well qualified and confident in their grasp of their

Curriculum Areas

subjects. There is an ample supply of audiovisual equipment, and specialist texts in classrooms. Displays of students' work are used effectively to enhance the learning environment. The religious education teaching area has examples of imaginative students' work on Catholic social teaching and apologetics. However, the library stock for all three subjects is inadequate. The self-assessment report acknowledges the need to improve the psychology bookstock.

Examples of students' achievements in psychology, sociology and religious studies, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level	Retention (%)	71	62	52
	Pass rate (%)	83	82	93
GCSE	Retention (%)	55	87	73
	Pass rate (%)	59	50	32

Source: college data

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

30 The self-assessment report was detailed and inspectors confirmed most of its findings. Weaknesses in the learning support provision were not identified by the college, but progress had been made in addressing some of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report by the time of the inspection.

Key strengths

- the quality of pre-enrolment information and guidance
- effective application, enrolment and induction procedures
- the college's supportive and friendly environment
- extensive monitoring of attendance and punctuality
- effective, well-resourced careers guidance
- wide-ranging involvement of the chaplaincy in college life
- the voluntary enrichment programme

Weaknesses

- inadequate learning support for students with additional needs
- some ineffective tutorials

31 Good-quality pre-enrolment information and guidance helps students select the most appropriate courses. Prospective students can attend open evenings, 'taster' days and 'roadshows'. Enrolment procedures are efficient. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that there is an effective college induction process. The students' handbook, which includes relevant information and a full year diary, is appreciated by students.

32 A key strength of the college is its supportive approach to students and this is emphasised in the self-assessment report. Students appreciate the calm environment and say they feel that it is both safe and friendly. One student, expressing the view of a larger group, said, 'people are interested in me as a person'. Staff expectations of students are high and many respond to this by achieving good results. Inspectors confirmed that the college is achieving its mission of 'a commitment to mutual respect and positive encouragement'.

33 The tutorial system includes guidance on careers, higher education and health education. Students have daily contact with their tutors in a 10-minute session during which information is disseminated and an opportunity is provided for discussion and reflection on a common theme. Each full-time group has a one-hour tutorial each week. The college recognises the variable quality of tutorials, and is taking steps to bring them all up to the quality of the best. There are appropriate procedures to monitor students' attendance and punctuality, and effective strategies to encourage appropriate behaviour, including a tutorial group contract which is created by negotiation in each group and signed by all the members of the group. This reinforces the college's mission to develop mutual trust and respect amongst students and staff.

34 Since the last inspection, the college has improved the learning support it gives to students. A co-ordinator for learner support has been appointed, and new systems are in place to identify learning support needs. Most of the 45 students currently receiving systematic additional help have problems such as dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties. Students can receive help through individual tuition, attendance at small groups or during ordinary lessons. However, the overall provision of learning support for students with additional needs remains inadequate. For example, a number of staff involved in learning support do

Cross-college Provision

not have relevant specialist skills; there is no workshop provision to develop study skills or assist students in English language; the disability statement is not distributed widely; and there is a lack of clarity about how to identify the students who have additional needs. These weaknesses are not recognised in the self-assessment report.

35 The college has developed an accredited voluntary enrichment programme since the previous inspection. Most students participate in this programme. This valuable development was not noted in the college's self-assessment report. Activities include sports, self-defence, dance, singing, drama and community work. Students develop their confidence and take an active part in college life through the elected student council. Council meetings are well attended and the council has been responsible for improving facilities and organising cultural events.

36 The college satisfies the legal requirements for providing collective acts of worship for students. The two chaplains work in partnership with senior managers, the care committee and a student chaplaincy support group. Mass is celebrated daily in the college chapel. Inspectors confirmed the college's judgement that the wide-ranging involvement of the chaplaincy in college life enhances students' spiritual development and learning. Activities organised through the chaplaincy include a residential retreat, students' involvement in charities to help the homeless, and a major college project setting up a mission in Ghana. The college has an effective counselling service, and students are referred to a range of external agencies when further help is necessary.

General Resources

Grade 2

37 Inspectors agreed with the judgements made in the college's self-assessment report. A number of the weaknesses identified by the college were being addressed at the time of the inspection.

Key strengths

- effectively-used, well-maintained accommodation
- good-quality learning resources centre
- excellent IT provision
- improved social facilities for students
- the relaxed, friendly atmosphere of the chaplaincy

Weaknesses

- poor access to the buildings for students with restricted mobility

38 The college occupies a single hillside site between Lewisham town centre and Blackheath. The centrepiece of the college foyer is a magnificent copy of a late medieval painting from the altar of the cathedral in Ghent, depicting 'The Triumphant Christ'. Since the last inspection many improvements have been made to the buildings including major work on the boilers, electrical installations, and roofs. The college's self-assessment report states that the general accommodation is suitable and well maintained, and that there are ample general teaching rooms to accommodate classes. Inspectors agreed with these judgements.

39 The learning resources department comprises a good-quality learning resources centre, built since the last inspection, a library, and a new room in which groups of students work together. There are sufficient spaces for students to study on their own. The last inspection report criticised the library bookstock

Cross-college Provision

and the fact that the computerised catalogue was not accessible to students. These weaknesses are being addressed, although some resources held within faculties are not yet on the catalogue. There is effective liaison between learning resources staff and teachers. Curriculum areas hold an appropriate variety of learning materials.

40 The commitment to supporting and developing IT across the college is a major element in the strategic plan. The self-assessment report states that the IT provision within the college is excellent, a view shared by inspectors. All staff and students have an electronic mail address. Access to the internet for research is readily available. Students and their parents have to sign a contract to ensure that access to the internet is not used for any purpose which conflicts with the college's Catholic ethos.

41 The self-assessment report identified that the social and catering provision was insufficient for the number of students attending the college. Since the report was produced, a second cafeteria has been opened and a group study area created. The chapel is centrally situated, and is a comfortable, well-furnished room which is used for individual prayerful reflection, services and presentations. The chaplaincy room has the relaxed, friendly atmosphere of a common room. It is well used by students of all faiths. Both rooms are enhanced by a variety of religious images. Staff have appropriate work areas, good access to IT, and training in its use. Sports and recreational facilities include a gymnasium, multi-gym, and tennis courts.

42 The college is built on a hillside and the buildings are on seven levels. As a result, many areas of the college, in particular the science laboratories, gymnasium and hall, are not accessible to students with restricted mobility. The college has identified this as a weakness in its self-assessment report, but has so far been unable to find an affordable solution to the problem. Wherever possible, the college

reschedules timetables to enable students with restricted mobility to attend lessons in rooms which are accessible to them but sometimes has to direct them to courses in other colleges which can more easily accommodate them.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

43 Inspectors concluded that the college identified in its self-assessment report the main strengths and most of the weaknesses in quality assurance and staff development.

Key strengths

- the college's self-critical culture
- high standards set by staff
- systematic quality assurance procedures
- quality standards for support services
- use of students' views in the evaluation of services and courses
- appropriate arrangements to identify development needs

Weaknesses

- some weak course and service reviews
- insufficient use of targets and performance indicators to monitor quality
- insufficient cross-college analysis of performance trends

44 The comprehensive self-assessment process builds upon the existing procedures for the review of courses and services and involves all staff and governors. The college produced its first self-assessment report in 1996-97. The process was guided by the self-assessment group which has now extended its remit and become the quality assurance committee. Staff used the framework set out in Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment* and developed quality statements suited to their

Cross-college Provision

needs. The self-assessment reports produced by course and service teams were presented to managers who verified that judgements were supported by evidence and moderated the grades. An external consultant assisted the college with its self-assessment. The process was thorough and led to the production of an evaluative report which identified most of the key strengths and weaknesses of the college's provision.

45 The college has made substantial progress since the last inspection in developing systematic quality assurance procedures for curriculum and service areas. A self-critical culture has been established and staff set high standards for themselves and students. The college takes careful account of the views of students, parents and others such as staff in partner schools. The college recognises in its self-assessment report that more work is needed to develop consistent procedures for the evaluation and review of courses and services.

46 An annual review of courses has been carried out for some years. Managers have taken care to work with staff to develop procedures which are understood and supported. The process involves continual evaluation of all aspects of courses. Course teams take into account students' views, the views of examiners and verifiers, and relevant statistical data. The findings are summarised in course review documents which are discussed by staff at formal meetings. Most course reviews are evaluative and analytical but a few are not. Most course teams carry out a careful and thorough review of teaching and learning, which has recently included classroom observation. The college feels that this aspect of self-assessment needs further development. All service and support teams have developed quality standards. Although staff set high standards and expect continual improvement, targets are not always set or performance indicators used to measure the improvements.

47 The college subscribes to a system for predicting students' GCE A level grades on the basis of their performance in GCSE examinations. The performance of students in GCE A level examinations has improved significantly over the past three years and, overall, students achieve better grades at GCE A level than those predicted. This information about the value added to students' achievements is given careful consideration by senior managers and the governors. Course teams make good use of it to evaluate students' achievements and to guide actions for improvement. Although information about students' achievements is well used, there is insufficient cross-college analysis of trends, such as the declining retention rates in two-year courses.

48 Staff have a staff development interview each year with their line manager. This is used to review the achievement of their objectives and to identify their staff development needs. This information, together with that gathered from the annual course reviews, is used in drawing up the college's staff development programme. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that the arrangements to identify staff development needs are appropriate. Most staff appreciate the opportunities for staff development which are made available to them. The majority of staff working on vocational courses have achieved relevant assessor and verifier awards; the rest are working towards them.

Cross-college Provision

Governance

Grade 1

49 The inspection team agreed broadly with the college's own assessment of governance.

Key strengths

- governors support all aspects of the Catholic mission of the college
- the broad range of skills amongst governors
- the involvement of governors in developing the strategic plan
- continuity of board membership
- effective, productive working relationships between governors and senior managers
- effective clerking arrangements

Weaknesses

- insufficient communication between governors, students and staff

50 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is good. The corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC. The continuity of membership has contributed to governors' close understanding of the college, a key strength which is acknowledged by the college in its self-assessment report. They take a keen interest in all aspects of the college's affairs, but are conscious of the distinction between governance and management. One of the governors attended a conference on self-assessment prior to producing a draft self-assessment for the governing body to consider. The self-assessment process was rigorous and was discussed during a number of governing body meetings.

51 The college is managed in accordance with the practices, rites and doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, as required by the instrument and articles of government. Governors support all aspects of the Catholic mission of the college, help to formulate and review the mission statement and support aspects of the college's curriculum. The chaplain attends governors' meetings, which helps to ensure that governors are well informed about the Catholic life of the college. Governors ensure that all prospective staff are, at interview, questioned on their attitude to the Catholic ethos of the college.

52 There are 19 governors. These comprise 11 foundation governors appointed by the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Southwark, four governors appointed by the foundation governors, a governor appointed by the local training and enterprise council (TEC), two governors elected from the staff of the college, and the principal. There is effective delegation of work to the finance and general purposes, remuneration, and audit committees. Governors operate within an agreed code of conduct, and maintain a register of their interests.

53 Clerking arrangements are efficient, a strength noted in the self-assessment report. Papers and minutes are carefully prepared and governors commented positively on the timeliness of their circulation. Governors were heavily involved in drafting the strategic plan. They receive regular financial management reports and information on students' achievements, retention, and destinations which enable them to monitor the college's performance. There are effective working relationships between governors and senior managers. Governors are committed to the promotion of equal opportunities.

54 The broad range of backgrounds and skills of governors has been used to good effect in developing the college. Governors visit the college regularly to participate in events such as careers fairs and award ceremonies. They also

Cross-college Provision

promote the college through their links with the local parishes. However, communications between governors and staff and students could be improved further, for example, if the governing body received presentations from a wider range of staff and students, a weakness not identified by the college in its self-assessment report.

Management

Grade 1

55 At the time of inspection, the college was in the process of a major reorganisation. Inspectors broadly agreed with the judgements the college made about management in its self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- the widely understood college mission which underpins all policy development
- effective strategic planning
- reliable, timely management information
- relevant performance indicators
- efficient staff deployment
- effective communication between managers and staff
- productive links with partner schools

Weaknesses

- lack of formality in monitoring achievement of strategic objectives

56 The college was in the process of reorganising its management structure during the inspection period. The new structure will be fully in place at the start of the next academic year. Consultation on restructuring has been extensive and has involved governors, senior and middle managers and staff. The restructuring has been guided by prudent strategic thinking and is being carried through with minimum disruption. At the time of the

inspection, the senior management team comprised the principal, the associate principal (student support), the acting vice-principal, and the college bursar. A newly-appointed principal is due to take up post in the term following inspection, and a newly-appointed curriculum vice-principal will join the college in September 1998. The college recognised in its self-assessment report a lack of clarity in the definition of the roles of middle managers, an issue which is being addressed as part of the restructuring.

57 The latest strategic plan was developed through extensive consultation with governors and managers at all levels. The draft plan was then discussed by teaching and support staff at an all-day staff conference before it was finalised. Robust management information underpinned the development of the strategic plan and the subsequent operational objectives. The data on students' achievements supplied to inspectors were found to be accurate when checked against source data.

58 The college's mission and strategic objectives underpin all policy developments. The mission is widely communicated to, and understood by staff. This key strength is noted in the college's self-assessment report. The Catholic ethos is manifested in all aspects of the life of the college. An integral part of the admissions process is the opportunity for individual students to explore why they wish to attend a Catholic college and for tutors to explain what students of other denominations and faiths can contribute.

59 The annual operating statement resulting from the strategic plan includes objectives relating to improvements in students' achievements and retention, promotion of the Catholic ethos and sense of community, enrolment targets, efficiency measures, quality initiatives, accommodation and learning resource developments. The strategic planning process has led to improvements. For example, improvements to the learning resources through

Cross-college Provision

success in bids for external funding and a comprehensive review of pastoral support.

60 The responsibility for achieving the operating objectives is devolved to appropriate managers. There is some variation in the way faculties and departments produce plans in response to these objectives. Strategic and operating objectives are also addressed by course teams as part of the course review process but the extent and detail with which they do this varies. There is an overreliance on informal approaches to monitoring the achievement of strategic objectives, a fact that was not identified by the college in its self-assessment report. There is a broad understanding among staff of the range of performance indicators used by the college. Targets for improving retention and students' achievements are developed through discussion and negotiation at various levels throughout the college. The recruitment of students is well planned, and the college regularly exceeds its recruitment targets. The close, productive links with partner schools provide data which enable the college to forecast the demand for its courses accurately.

61 The effectiveness of communications within the college is enhanced by the weekly meetings of all college staff and through the distribution of a daily news-sheet. The college's development committee, comprising senior and middle managers, meets termly to develop and review policies and strategic matters. A cross-college team of middle managers works well together to plan college events, and co-ordinate course and service reviews.

62 Cost-effective deployment of staff has enabled the college to provide additional academic support for students during summer enrolment periods. These arrangements have been implemented following consultation and agreement between managers and staff on annual work schedules. External consultants have been used to provide information on different aspects of college expenditure including

comparisons with expenditure in similar colleges. The information helped senior managers to prepare the strategic plan. Staff costs are currently 72 per cent of college expenditure. Budgets for consumable items are delegated to heads of faculty using a well-understood formula. The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. Management accounts are prepared every four months by the firm providing internal and external audit services to the college. These are distributed to governors and senior managers. Neither the internal nor the external auditors have identified significant weaknesses in the college's systems of financial control.

Conclusions

63 The inspection team found that the college's self-assessment report provided a useful basis for planning the inspection. The college's self-assessment process is thorough, and involves all staff. The strengths and weaknesses identified in the report were generally supported by appropriate evidence. Some strengths and a few weaknesses identified by inspectors were missed in the report.

64 Strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection are listed under each section of this report. The main strengths and weaknesses are identified in the summary.

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (November 1997)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	0
16-18 years	99
19-24 years	1
25+ years	0
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (November 1997)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Foundation	2
Intermediate	14
Advanced	84
Higher education	0
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (November 1997)

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	206	0	22
Engineering	25	0	3
Business	138	0	14
Health and community care	35	0	4
Art and design	143	0	15
Humanities	398	0	42
Total	945	0	100

Source: college data

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (January 1998)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	46	5	0	51
Supporting direct learning contact	9	0	0	9
Other support	9	2	0	11
Total	64	7	0	71

Source: college data, rounded to nearest full-time equivalent

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£2,840,000	£3,190,000	£3,041,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£22.13	£20.41	£21.17
Payroll as a proportion of income	68%	67%	*
Achievement of funding target	100%	107%	119%
Diversity of income	3%	11%	*
Operating surplus	£238,000	£442,000	*

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), Funding Allocations 1996-97 (1996-97)

Payroll – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), college (1996-97)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96)

*data not available

Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	211	208	244
	Average point score per entry	5.2	5.2	5.7
	Position in tables	top 10%	top 10%	top 10%
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	+	59	65
	Percentage achieving qualification	+	90%	80%
	Position in tables	+	top 10%	top third
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	103	128
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	62%	84%
	Position in tables	*	middle third	top 10%

Source: DfEE

+omitted from DfEE published table

*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available

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